

# THE NATIONAL REPUBLICAN, TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1877.

## National Republican.

W. J. MURTAUGH.....PROPRIETOR

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### SECRECY OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.

Unfavorable comment has been made upon the course of the President in adopting the opinion of Attorney General Devens for his guidance in the matter of the application of the San Francisco Chronicle for copies of certain letters of recommendation on file in the Departments in this city. We think that such fault-finding is entirely uncalled for, and exhibits ignorance of the real merits of the question.

The Constitution provides that the President may require the opinion in writing of the principal officers in each of the Executive Departments upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices. While this provision does not admit of divided responsibility it nevertheless justifies the President in paying a very high regard to the opinions of the men whom thus respond to his constitutional advisement. The duty of giving advice under the provisions of the Constitution above noted imposes upon the members of the Cabinet very grave responsibilities even though they are not like British Ministers, responsible to Parliament for the advice they may give. The theory of ministerial responsibility was, no doubt, in the minds of the framers of our Constitution, but could be carried no further on account of the extensive powers with which the Executive is invested.

The opinions of members of the Cabinet having this solemn recognition in the Constitution, the President is justified in paying a very high respect to them, though, of course, he is not absolutely bound by them.

**THE BANKS PLAN.**

Gen N P BANKS, of Massachusetts, has his plan for settling the labor question. He proposes to appoint a commission to colonize families from cities on the public lands to the West. Each family is to have forty acres, to be provided with farming utensils, breeding stock, and one year's rations by the general government.

We doubt the expediency of a measure of this sort, for it would be liable to abuse by men who would avail themselves of the Government bounty as a temporary expedient merely, without any intention of becoming permanently in farm life. It might be well enough for the Government to furnish transportation to all persons who can give satisfactory proof of their intention to settle on farms in the West and are unable to go thither without assistance. There are, undoubtedly, in all the large cities of the country, many worthy persons who would be glad to go West if they could get the means of doing so. It would be good economy to afford such persons the means of getting to localities where their labor is in demand.

The opinions of the Attorney General stand upon somewhat higher ground. He is not only a member of the Cabinet, but is that member who is charged with the duty of giving official interpretations of the Constitution and the laws passed in pursuance thereof. The office has, fortunately, very generally been filled by men of great eminence in the legal profession. From the very nature, therefore, of the matters which are the subjects of reference to the Attorney General it follows that the opinions of that officer must always have very great weight with the President, and hence they have, with very few exceptions, been followed by our Chief Magistrates from the foundation of the Government down to the present time.

The question presented by the application of the San Francisco Chronicle for copies of the recommendations upon which certain officers were appointed in California was a purely legal one. The right of that paper to be furnished with those documents was denied, and the question then became a simple inquiry into the law governing the case. Attorney General Devens, whose learning and ability as a lawyer are of the highest order, rendered an opinion adverse to the right of the San Francisco Chronicle to be furnished with the copies of the letters demanded. According to all evidence the President was justified in acting in accordance with the opinion of the Attorney General.

It was of course proper that the legal rights of persons should be respected who had filed papers with the officers of the several Departments of the Government, with the understanding that they were confidential. As to all future application and recommendations all trouble can be avoided by reciting them with the express understanding that they are not to be regarded as confidential. As this is heretofore, as we understand it, to be the rule of the Government, no great public inconvenience can result from the rule laid down by the Attorney General.

**THE LABOR QUESTION.**

DAVID A. WELLS has shown that ninety per cent of the American people care nothing for improvements in machinery or tools, and that the entire population can consume this leaves four millions out of the forty millions of our citizens unemployed. We do not doubt the substantial accuracy of the statement made by Mr. Wells if it be confined to manufactured articles, but as a general statement it is exceedingly inaccurate, for the reason that it leaves out of view altogether the agricultural element.

If there are, as Mr. Wells estimates, four millions of people unemployed in this country, it is not because their labor is not needed, but because it is not applied in such places as there is room for it. The factories are overcrowded, but farm hands are in demand everywhere. The cities are all over-populated, but there is room in many millions in the country. Let one-half of the four millions of unemployed people in the cities be transferred to the country and their labor there will give employment to the other two millions who remain in the cities. This would be brought about by the increased demand for supplies which would arise from such an addition to the agricultural population of the country.

Population is certainly not a real source of national weakness for a young country like ours with such abundant resources. We have within our territorial limits the means of feeding and clothing ten times our present population. It is therefore, manifest that if we are to find a market for our products we must turn to the country. This is the only way to meet the emergency.

**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WASHINGTON.** Work of art should be entrusted to a commission composed of persons well known for their cultivated taste.

CORNELIUS MORRISON, of Illinois, announces himself as a candidate for Speaker. This can only be regarded as one of the humors of the contest. There is no harm in indulging Mr. Morrison in his little joke.

**A CAPE MAY CORRESPONDENT** says that last Sunday, at St. John's church, Boston, was the only instance in which dressed lady under thirty in the church.

**MARSHAL TRAVELER.** The first revolt in Ohio: the first formal movement of the Republicans to re-establish their party of 1860. It is made in the state of Cape May. The rebels are protesting by tories of the South. In places where the right to protest is still left them, and scattered throughout the North, but some of these days they will leave his unguarded home to attack them with a war-hoof and a sharp sword. Mr. Curtis, the leading knight, will remark: "And one makes seventeen." Perhaps, though, Mr. Halstead's severity is the offspring of a wife.

**CONFIDENT HOPE OF THE CONKLING PARTY.** From the Albany Express:

It is to be the impression that the Senate finds itself compelled to make some arrangement with the administration, notwithstanding the fact that the party of 1860 has been persecuted without mercy.

**JOHN B. CONNELL,** naval officer at New York, intend to obey the President's order to Federal employees and resign his position on the National Republican Committee and the New York State Committee? It is about time he did something.

**HARD TIMES FOR THE REPUBLICAN.** From the Chicago Tribune:

It is only by practical plans like this that the labor question can be solved. It will not be safe for laborers to depend upon the theories of demagogues for relief. Labor can never find relief except by seeking a good market for it. When the demand for it has ceased in one place employment must be sought in another. All agitation intended to force capital into the employment of labor at unprofitable rates will only aggravate the trouble. The more insecure capital becomes the lower wages will fall.

We are glad to learn that the workingmen in our neighboring city of Baltimore are beginning to take a correct view on the subject. Some of them are making a movement for bread that will be sure to bring it. An association of workmen has been formed in that city to emigrate to Kansas with their wives and children and settle on the public land in that State. The members of the association are all laborers who have had some experience in farming or are skilled mechanics in trades useful in the West. This movement deserves special encouragement, for it should be successful, the example will be extensively followed to all the Northern cities. It is now too soon

for persons who intend emigrating to the West next year to begin looking for suitable locations, and therefore workmen who contemplate imitating the example of their Baltimore brethren should not do so.

The derangement of labor is now very great, but if natural laws are left to operate unmixed a healthy equilibrium would soon be established between the demand and supply. A great deal of the present trouble results from artificial legislation and railroad enterprises. In consequence of the country all the great manufacturing centers have been overwhelmed with people. There is still enough manufacturing carried on to give employment to a large percentage of the laborers who were engaged during flash times, but the surplus men who were drawn into such employments under a system artificially stimulated must seek some other sort of employment.

It must not be forgotten, however, that no measure will bring such durable relief to the country as industry accompanied by a spirit of economy. As long as wasteful and extravagant habits prevail universal discontent will reign, and the whole social fabric will be shaken by revolutionary and communistic movements. It does not matter much how many people make as it does how much they save. Whenever it becomes characteristic of the citizens of a country to spend less than they make that country will be blessed with prosperity. The President is paying a very high regard to the actions of the men who thus disregard his constitutional advise. The duty of giving advice under the provisions of the Constitution above noted imposes upon the members of the Cabinet a responsibility even though they are not like British Ministers, responsible to Parliament for the advice they may give. Extravagance has been the bane of our Republic. States, cities and individuals have gone recklessly into debt, and we are now paying the penalty of having lived beyond our means.

### PERSONAL.

JACQUES J. LIVON, who has been minister for the congregation of Sheriffs Israel church, in New York, for thirty-nine years, died on Sunday.

The only immediate descendants of Gov. Tompkins are his two daughters, Mrs. Anna Maria and Mary Tompkins. They are the daughters of the Governor's great-grandmother.

**REAR ADMIRAL FREEBLE.** Spent the fourth of June in New York. He expects to leave on Tuesday for Panama, and return on Friday.

THE HON. ALFRED ANTHONY, of Poughkeepsie, has been appointed to succeed light captain of the train. He is a young man, the Dutchess county bar, was twice elected district court judge, and was the leading Republican.

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